

## LETTER IV.

WHEN the gloomy estimate of means and of plans for the amendment of mankind does not make an exception of the actual human administration of the religion of Christ, I am anxious not to seem to fail in justice to that religion, by which I believe that every improvement of a sublime order yet awaiting our race must be effected. I trust I do not fail; since I keep in my mind a clear distinction between Christianity itself as a thing of divine origin and nature, and the administration of it by a system of merely human powers and means. These means are indeed of divine appointment, and to a certain extent are accompanied by a special divine agency. But how far this agency accompanies them is seen in the measure and limit of their success. Where *that* stands arrested, the fact itself is the proof that further than so the superior operation does not attend the human agents and means. There it stops, and leaves them to accomplish, if they can, what remains. What is it that remains? If the general transformation of mankind into such persons as could be justly deemed true disciples of Christ, were regarded as the object of his religion, how mysteriously small a part of that object has the divine agency ever yet been exerted to accomplish! And then, the awful and immense remainder evinces the inexpressible imbecility of the means, when left to be applied as a mere human administration. The manifestation of its incompetency is fearfully conspicuous in the vast majority, the numerous millions of Christendom, and the millions of even our own country, on whom this religion has no direct influence. I need not observe what numbers of these latter have heard or read the evangelic declaration thousands of times, nor how very many of them are fortified in an insensibility, on which its most momentous announcements strike as harmless as the slenderest arrows on the shield of Ajax. Probably each religious teacher can recollect, besides his general experience, very particular instances, in which he has set himself to exert the utmost force of his mind, in reasoning, illustration, and serious appeal, to impress some one important idea, on some one class of persons to whom it was most specifically applicable and needful; and has perceived the plainest indications, both at the instant and-